Making Changes:

A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships

Fourth Edition

Nova Scotia
Advisory Council
on the Status of
Women

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Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

PO Box 745, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2T3
Phone: (902) 424-8662 / 1-800-565-8662
Fax: (902) 424-0573
E-mail: nsacsw@gov.ns.ca
Website: http://www.gov.ns.ca/staw/

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Lynda Ceresne, writer and editor
Allison Carpenter, researcher
Elizabeth Owen, illustrator
Dee Ryan-Mercier, graphic designer

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A Declaration of Rights

I am not the cause of my abuser's violent behaviour.

I have the right to feel safe.

I have the right to not be hit.

I do not like or want to be abused. I do not have to take it.

I have the right to say "no."

I have the right to be treated with respect.

I am an important human being.

I am a worthwhile woman.

I have the right to raise my children in safety.

I do have power over my own life.

I can use my power to take good care of myself.

I can decide for myself what is best for me.

I have the right to be believed and valued.

I can make changes in my life if I want to.

I have the right to live in peace.

I am not alone. I can ask others for help.

I have the right to end the violence.

If you are a woman experiencing abuse or if you have previously been abused, this book is intended to help you.

You can read this book in whatever way you want. You don't have to start on the first page. You don't have to read it in order. You don't have to read it all now. You can read the parts that are most important to you and read the rest later.

You can rip off the front cover or you can tear out pages if you need to. You can also write in it if that is safe for you. Read the book when you are ready and when you are safe.

You may want to leave this book at work or with a friend. You may have friends you wish to share this book with.

If you are a worker who offers support and counselling, or a friend or family member of a woman experiencing abuse, you may find this book helpful as well.

This book could also be helpful to anyone who wants to make a difference in her/his community. It makes it easier for women in abusive relationships and those who work with them when individuals, service agencies, and institutions refuse to buy into myths about family and take action to end violence by providing help for abused women. Change is happening, but it is often slow and challenging.

If you have questions about the information in this book, or if you are in a crisis, call the local transition house (see directory, pages 78-80).

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Introduction

Women can be abused physically, emotionally/psychologically, socially, verbally, sexually, and financially. Maybe you are being abused by your partner, husband, boyfriend, or some other person in your life. Maybe you think you are being abused, but you are not sure. We hope this book can help you decide what is happening to you and what you might want to do about it. While we have used the term "he" when referring to the abuser, the information contained in this guide is also intended for women in abusive lesbian relationships. There are differences in the way we think and talk about abuse by women, but some things may be the same.

You are not alone. Women from many different backgrounds are abused. They have different levels of education and income. They are from all age groups, races, and cultures. Some have disabilities. They may have different experiences and their stories may not be quite the same as yours, but there will be similarities.

Remember:

- There is no excuse or reason for abuse.
- The abuse is not your fault.
- You never deserve to be abused.
- Abuse of any kind is never okay.
- There are people willing to help.
- You are not alone.
- It takes a lot of courage to face these issues.

What You Can Do If You Know a Woman in an Abusive Relationship

Do

- read this book
- be patient and understanding
- help her make a safety plan
- believe her
- encourage her to call a transition house for information and support
- encourage and support her to make her own decisions
- let her know you'll stand by her no matter what she decides
- be patient if she is confused or unsure about what to do

Don't

- ask why she stays
- put the abuser down (she may still love the abuser)
- tell her what to do
- believe the common myths about woman abuse
- judge or lecture her

The messages you want to send

- Her safety and her children's safety are the most important issues.
- Physical and sexual abuse are crimes.
- She is not the cause of her abuse.
- Violence is never okay.
- She is not alone.
- She cannot change her partner's behaviour.
- Abuse is not a loss of control, it is a means of control.

Remember:

You have a responsibility to report to Child Protection Services when children have witnessed repeated incidents of abuse or are being directly abused.

Information about Abuse

What Is Abuse?

Abuse of a woman is an abuse of power and can be a criminal act. It is about exerting control in a relationship. It is not about problems with anger management or addictions.

Abuse takes many forms:

- physical
- sexual
- emotional/psychological
- verbal
- social
- financial

Abuse happens in all different kinds of families and intimate relationships. Women are most often abused by their husbands, their boyfriends, the men they live with or have had a relationship with in the past. But women are also abused in dating relationships, and they are abused in lesbian relationships. Women with disabilities and elderly women also report abuse by family and caregivers.

People call abuse of women different things:

- wife battering/wife assault
- domestic violence
- family violence
- wife abuse/spousal abuse
- woman abuse
- physical or mental cruelty
- violence against women
- assault

Some Forms of Abuse Are Crimes

These forms of abuse are criminal offences in the Criminal Code:

- physical assault: hitting, punching, choking, etc.
- sexual assault
- child abuse
- threats to harm
- withholding food and medical treatment
- threats to kill
- taking your pay cheque
- stalking or criminal harassment (creating fear by repeatedly following, communicating, or attempting to communicate with you or any member of your family)

Types of Abuse

Physical

- choking, kicking, punching, slapping, grabbing, poking you
- pushing, shoving, spitting at you, pulling your hair
- physically restraining you, stopping you from leaving
- holding or hugging you when you say "no"
- any unwanted physical contact
- abusing your children
- treating you roughly
- throwing things

Sexual

- forcing you to have sex (rape)
- threatening to harm your reputation
- putting you down or comparing you sexually to others
- getting back at you for refusing to have sex
- sleeping around, or threatening to
- treating you as a sex object
- forcing you to look at pornography
- hounding you for sex or forcing certain positions
- accusing you of having sex with other men

Verbal

- verbally threatening you (telling you to stop crying ... or else)
- calling you names (stupid, slut, crazy, bitch, whore ...)
- yelling, shouting, or raising his voice at you
- abusing your children
- being sarcastic or critical
- blaming you repeatedly for things that go wrong
- insulting you or your family
- laughing in your face

Financial/Economic

- controlling you by not paying the bills
- refusing to give you money for groceries, clothing, things you need
- spending all the money on things he wants (alcohol/drugs, gambling, trips, cars, sports)

- forbidding you to work outside the home
- taking your money or your pay cheque
- not letting you take part in financial decisions

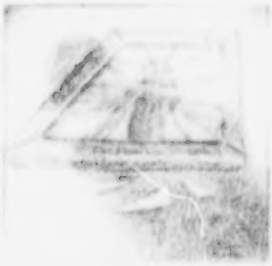
Emotional/Psychological

- intimidating you, making you afraid
- playing 'mind games'
- ignoring you, being silent, walking away from you in discussion
- refusing to deal with issues
- putting you down, finding and talking about your faults, brainwashing
- acting jealous and being possessive, falsely accusing you
- treating you like a child
- making you think you're stupid or crazy
- refusing to do things with you or for you (such as withholding sex)
- not telling you what he is doing and lying
- criticizing how you look
- not allowing you to do what he does himself
- telling sexist or woman-hating jokes
- destroying your belongings
- hurting your pets

Social

- putting you down, ignoring you
- embarrassing you in front of your children, making scenes in public
- not letting you see your friends or being rude to your friends
- being jealous of your friends, family, or accomplishments
- being nice to others but changing his personality when with you
- not taking responsibility for the children
- turning your children against you
- choosing friends or family over you
- comparing you unfavourably with other women
- not allowing you to express your emotions (denying your feelings)
- taking your passport or threatening to have you deported

Abuse of women is violence. It is not acceptable. Certain forms of abuse are criminal offences. See page 6 or contact your local police or transition house for further information.



"I know where to put the ice pack when he hits me, but where do I put the ice pack when it's emotional abuse?"

—Gail (age 33)

Who Abuses Women?

Abusers can be found in any type of family or intimate/close relationship. Abusers can be:

- husbands
- ex-husbands
- live-in partners
- boyfriends
- lovers
- any relative
- caregivers

Men who abuse women can be of any age, race, religion, or economic background. They can have any kind of job and any level of education.

Abuse also occurs in lesbian relationships.

The one thing all abusers have in common is that they all believe it is okay to hurt people, even those they love.

Violence is *never* okay, no matter what.

Abuse in Lesbian Relationships

Abuse does happen in some lesbian relationships. There is a common misconception that abuse occurs only in relationships between men and women. This is untrue. Commonly held stereotypes and prejudice about lesbians are factors that have contributed to lesbians' reluctance to speak out about violence in their relationships.

There are some similarities to male violence against women:

- It is difficult for women to leave abusive relationships.
- Lesbians may learn, as men do, that in our society violence is a means to gain power and maintain control.

- The pattern of abuse and the forms of abuse are the same: physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, verbal, social, and financial.
- The abused woman feels responsible for her partner's violence and emotional state.
- Abuse is always the responsibility of the abuser and is always a choice.

There are also differences from male violence against women:

- There are few services specifically for lesbians in abusive relationships.
- The abused woman fears that she will not be believed about the abuse due to lack of exposure of lesbian violence.
- The abused woman fears losing friends and support within the lesbian community.
- Homophobia in society denies the reality of lesbians, including their relationships. When abuse exists, attitudes often range from lack of interest to generalizations about relationships being unstable or unhealthy.

Some common misconceptions about abuse in lesbian relationships:

- "Lesbians are always equal in relationships. It's not abuse, it's a relationship struggle."

  False: Two women in a relationship do not automatically guarantee equality. Relationship struggles are never equal if abuse is involved.

- "Lesbian relationships are never abusive."

  False: There is a false assumption that all lesbians are caring and supportive to one another. Violence does exist in some lesbian relationships.

Woman Abuse in Aboriginal Communities

Although woman abuse occurs in all cultural, racial, and religious groups, women in Aboriginal communities face a number of additional difficulties when they want to get support or leave an abusive situation. Women who must leave their community often experience the distress of having to abandon their support systems, kinship, and cultural roots. Stereotypes and myths about family violence say that abuse is part of traditional Aboriginal culture. This belief is false. Violence is not part of traditional culture, and it is unacceptable.

The following are some barriers to leaving:

- limited access to information (e.g. legal rights) and support services (e.g. transition houses, crisis centres) for women in isolated and minority communities
- lack of transportation services
- loss of kinship ties, support network, cultural community, and sense of identity
- isolation and distress
- fear of keeping alive stereotypes and negative images of Aboriginal people

If services are accessible, women often face other barriers and concerns, including:

- fear of being misunderstood by support staff
- lack of resources for treatment or support
- feeling that services are not suited to their culture
- misunderstanding and/or fear of the justice system and law enforcement officials
- lack of anonymity in seeking services on reserves, which are usually very small communities
- reluctance to involve a justice system that is seen as racist

Woman Abuse in African Nova Scotian Communities

Women suffering abuse in African Nova Scotian communities also face additional challenges and barriers to leaving their home and getting help. They may face the prospect of leaving kinship, social support networks, and their own communities. This may be more difficult if they live in isolated communities and have limited transportation services.

Some issues African Nova Scotian women face include:

- Historical oppression, discrimination, and unequal treatment have resulted in mistrust and fear of justice and social service systems and reluctance to turn to these agencies for help.
- The extended family is highly valued in African Canadian communities, so many women feel pressured to keep silent about abuse or downplay its severity because of kinship.
- Reporting abuse may be seen as betraying partner and furthering stereotypes of African Canadian men.
- Concerns that their partner may be subjected to racism makes it even more difficult for women to report their abuser.

- Fear of being shut out or blamed by the community often leads to silence about abuse.
- It is important for them to secure support from members/women of their own community.
- Few employees of colour work in transition houses, hospitals, and policing.

Abuse of Women with Disabilities

Women with disabilities are often more vulnerable to abuse and face additional barriers and further abuse because of the limitations they may have due to their disabilities. Society's negative images and myths about women with disabilities increase the risk of abuse.

What makes women with disabilities more vulnerable to abuse?

- The disability often gets used as the basis for the inequity in the relationship.
- Destruction of property can often be more dangerous if an assistive device or a helping dog is harmed.
- They do not have access to support services.
- Women who have difficulty walking, understanding, hearing, or speaking may be unable to flee, get help, or report their abuse or may not be believed when they do.
- They are often not considered to be capable parents if parenting support is needed.
- Some women may not be aware they are experiencing abuse.
- The abuser may have blamed them for their illness or disability or have told them they are making it up or seeking attention.
- They have been made to feel worthless by abuser: "Who will want you? You are damaged goods."

Mandatory Reporting

The law protects people living at home who are unable to protect themselves because of mental or physical ability. Under the Nova Scotia Protection Act, anyone who suspects than an adult may need protection must report this to the Department of Community Services adult protection staff.

Woman Abuse in Immigrant and New Canadian[1] Communities

[1] Throughout this text we use the term 'new Canadian', which includes first and second generation immigrants, refugees, people in ethno-cultural communities, and people without permanent resident status.

Family violence exists in all communities and cuts across all ethnic, racial, class, economic, and religious groups. Women suffering abuse in new Canadian communities often face additional challenges and barriers in escaping violence.

Some issues abused new Canadian women face include:

- fear of losing immigrant status and fear of being deported
- culture shock
- lack of information about Canadian laws and their rights as women living in Canada
- fear of losing their children
- fear of being turned away from their community
- fear and distrust of the police
- fear of being without male protection
- experiences of prejudice, discrimination, and racism
- lack of English language skills
- isolation
- fear of bringing shame to family
- lack of information about social services
- lack of services that meet their needs
- difficulties living within a shelter environment
- in many cases, low income and job insecurity

Why Does Abuse Happen?

There is no easy answer to why men abuse women. Women were not always considered equal citizens. There were many things they were not allowed to do. In families they were often treated like property, belonging first to a father or other male relative and later to a husband. The man was the legal head of the household and ruled the family. It was okay for a man to use force to control his wife or solve family problems. Experts argue that men still learn to be aggressive and to express frustration in more violent ways than women.

One result of this history is that women are still not equal to men in many ways, especially economically. This makes women more vulnerable when violence occurs, and it makes them less able to leave an abusive relationship.

Healthy relationships are based on equality and trust. Abuse of women is about power and control, the betrayal of trust, and lack of respect. It's about using force or threats to make you afraid.

It's about using fear to control you. The following diagram shows how power and control are at the centre of abusive behaviour.

PHYSICAL
VIOLENCE
SEXUAL
USING COERCION AND THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her • threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare • making her drop charges • making her do illegal things.
USING INTIMIDATION
Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures • smashing things • destroying her property • abusing pets • displaying weapons.
USING ECONOMIC ABUSE
Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income.
USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down • making her feel bad about herself • calling her names • making her think she's crazy • playing mind games • humiliating her • making her feel guilty.
POWER AND CONTROL
USING MALE PRIVLEGE
Treating her like a servant • making all the big decisions • acting like the "master of the castle" • being the one to define men's and women's roles.
USING ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes • limiting her outside involvement • using jealousy to justify actions.
USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty about the children • using the children to relay messages • using visitation to harass her • threatening to take the children away.
MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING
Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously • saying the abuse didn't happen • shifting responsibility for abusive behavior • saying she caused it.
PHYSICAL
VIOLENCE
SEXUAL

DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
206 West Fourth Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55806
218.722-4134

A man may abuse a woman because he ...

- has learned this behaviour in his own family
- feels it is an acceptable male role to control women
- is influenced by the way women are shown in the media
- wants to maintain a tough macho image
- believes violence is a way to show male power
- has low self-esteem and wants his partner to be dependent on him
- thinks that there are few, if any, consequences for his violent acts

No matter why he does it, it is not your fault. Every man who is abusive must take responsibility for his behaviour. No one has the right to hit or hurt you. No matter what you do, you do not deserve abuse. You do not ask for it.

Myths about Abuse

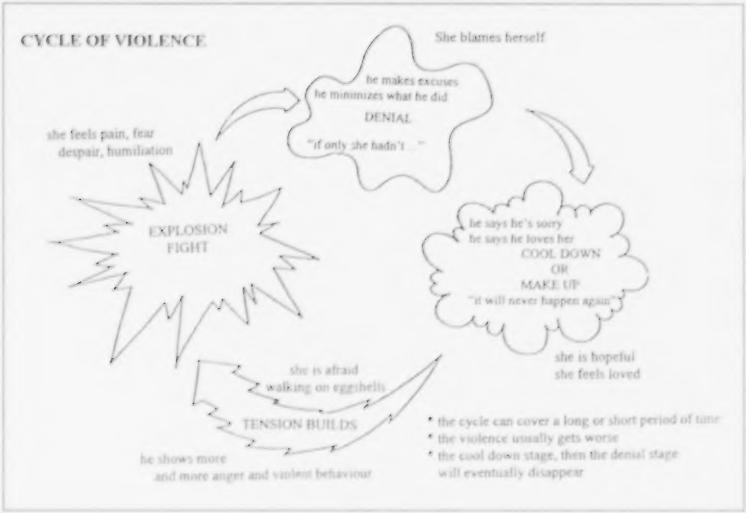
Myth	**Fact**
Family members are always kind and loving to each other.	Family members can also be brutal and threatening.
A man's home is his castle, and he rules the roost.	Society often accepts the man as the family head and therefore the boss.
Men who abuse their partners are mentally ill.	All abusive men are *not* mentally ill. Abusive men learn to use violence in certain situations. Most abusers are not violent in all relationships.
Women provoke abuse, so they deserve it.	Nobody ever deserves to be abused. This is an excuse abusive men make for not taking responsibility.
Women can leave if they want to.	There are many reasons why women don't leave: financial or emotional dependency, low self-esteem, fear, a belief that marriage is forever, social/family pressure.

Only poor women get abused.	Abuse has no boundaries. Women with low incomes are more likely to use shelters. Middle and upper income women are more likely to use other resources.
Alcohol/drugs cause a man to abuse.	Alcohol/drugs may trigger abusive behaviour in some men or make it worse. Alcohol/drugs do not cause the abuse. If he stops using alcohol/drugs it doesn't mean he'll stop abusing.
He loves her; it happened because she made him jealous.	Love is about trust and respect. Abusive men often get jealous for no reason. She is not responsible for his jealousy. He chooses to feel this way. He can choose non-abusive ways to react.

Is There a Pattern to Abuse?

For many women, abuse and violence start early in the relationship. For others it may start later—quite often during pregnancy. He may use different types of abuse in different situations. Whatever the type of abuse or the pattern, violent and abusive actions and behaviour are his way of maintaining power and control over you.

There is no predictable pattern of violence, but generally there is a cycle of violence that many women recognize. It may look like this ...



- First, the tension and anger build up. Sometimes there's an argument. She may try to keep the peace.
- The abuser explodes and becomes violent or makes threats about becoming violent. He hits her, threatens her (or something/someone she loves), verbally abuses her, or abuses her in some other way.
- Then there's a cool-down, make-up, or calm stage. The abuser may say he's sorry or he may deny it ever happened. The abuser may promise it will never happen again and may reinforce this by doing something nice (buy gifts, dinner, flowers).
- There is a time of peace, which is usually temporary. It may be a control tactic to keep her in the relationship.
- Sooner or later, the tension builds up again, his need to control increases, and the abuse starts over.

You cannot predict what will start or end the cycle, no one thing triggers the violence. Over time the phases are likely to get shorter, closer together, and his violence will increase in intensity.

Is It Abuse?

Some women say, "But he loves me." Maybe he does love you, but if he does, then he would trust you and he certainly wouldn't harm you. There are other ways to behave with people you love. He can choose not to abuse you and not to

treat you the way he does. It's up to him. He has to take responsibility for his behaviour.

Maybe you feel sorry for the abuser. Lots of women do. Maybe you think you can change him. Perhaps he has problems. Maybe he was abused himself. Maybe he's insecure now and needs you to make him feel better about himself. But you can't make someone feel good about himself. He has to learn to do that without putting someone else down. If you refuse to let him treat you badly, it doesn't mean you don't love him.

Regardless of why he does it, an abuser's behaviour cannot be justified. Abuse is wrong.

There are other ways to deal with problems. There are other ways to express anger. He has a choice. If he chooses to use violence, he has to take the responsibility for that, not you. And if he hurts you physically or sexually, that's a crime. If he threatens you, that may be a crime too.

If you are asking yourself if his behaviour is abusive, you probably already know the answer. Trust yourself. Trust your instincts.

Are You Being Abused?

Does he ...

- ❑ get jealous when you're around other people
- ❑ make fun of you in front of your friends and family
- ❑ destroy or threaten to destroy your possessions
- ❑ praise you one minute and put you down the next
- ❑ call you names or threaten you
- ❑ ignore you or not take you seriously
- ❑ make you choose between your friends/family and him
- ❑ blame you when things go wrong
- ❑ push you around or hit you
- ❑ threaten to take the children
- ❑ say abuse is wrong but hit the walls and yell at you
- ❑ harm or threaten to harm your pet
- ❑ threaten to harm your family members/friends
- ❑ threaten to kill or harm himself if you leave, call the police, or tell someone

Do you think that ...

- ❑ you have to ask permission to spend money or go out
- ❑ you are at fault when things go wrong
- ❑ you have to 'make things right' just for him
- ❑ you have to do what he wants...or else
- ❑ you must make excuses for your partner's behaviour
- ❑ you have to check in if you go anywhere
- ❑ you have to put your dreams and goals on hold
- ❑ he is trying to run your life
- ❑ maybe all the terrible things he says about you are true

Do you feel ...

- ❑ afraid to make decisions for fear of his reaction or anger
- ❑ isolated from friends, family, and activities
- ❑ afraid to tell him if you have a good time
- ❑ afraid to express your own opinions or say "no" to something
- ❑ trapped, unable to go out without his permission
- ❑ your joy in life diminishing
- ❑ afraid to break up with or leave him

If you answer "yes" to some of these questions, you may be in an abusive relationship. You are not alone.

What Does Abuse Do to Women?

A woman who is abused often lives with constant fear, worry, guilt, and self-blame. She may begin to feel worthless, helpless, or ashamed. She may feel like a failure. She will almost certainly feel degraded.

The symptoms of physical abuse can be black eyes, broken bones, bruises, burns, concussions, cuts, scratches—even death. If a woman is beaten while she is pregnant, she may lose the baby. The effects of emotional or psychological abuse cannot be seen but can be just as harmful.

A woman experiencing abuse of any kind may feel that no one could ever love her. She may feel stupid or ugly and all alone. This is what the abuser wants. It makes it easier for him to have control over her.

After a while, she may begin to lose her self-respect. She may begin to use alcohol or drugs to dull the pain.

For some women, the hardest thing is feeling the loss:

- of self-respect
- of respect for him
- of someone to be with
- of hope
- of happiness
- of love
- of companionship
- of safety
- of family and friends
- of independence
- of future goals and dreams
- of laughter and joy
- of her own identity

If you are being abused, you may feel unhappy or tired all the time. You likely feel depressed, trapped, or afraid. You may feel isolated from family and friends.

Children Who Witness Abuse

If you have children, you may have decided to put up with the abuse for their sake. But children who witness abuse may be experiencing abuse themselves.

Children often see and hear more than we think. They have probably seen or heard the violence and it will likely have affected them.

Children who witness parental violence can be as severely affected as children who are direct victims of physical or sexual abuse.

They may:

- be scared, confused, and unhappy
- have physical complaints such as headaches or stomach aches
- blame themselves

- have night-time difficulties such as insomnia, nightmares, or bed-wetting
- behave aggressively or become withdrawn
- cling to their mother or try to take care of her
- exhibit disrespectful/abusive behaviour towards their mother
- feel responsible for the violence
- seek punishment by lying or stealing (believing punishment means love)
- be abused too

Children who witness abuse often learn that it's all right to hurt people they love. They learn that it's normal for someone who loves them to hurt them, but it's not!

Children from violent homes may end up believing that:

- it's okay for men to hit, boss, or control their partners
- it's okay for men to bully and control women
- this is the way that families behave
- violence is a way to win arguments and get your own way
- big people have power they often misuse
- all men are bullies who push women and children around
- punishment means love
- women are weak and can be pushed around
- men are strong and should be in control
- women can't take care of themselves or their children
- you can only express anger through aggression and abuse
- 'real men' don't feel or show weakness, fear, sadness, or confusion
- women are naturally inferior to men
- to be in a relationship, women have to put up with abuse

Note: The Nova Scotia Children and Family Services Act (1991) recognizes that repeatedly witnessing domestic violence is a form of child abuse. **Anyone who suspects that a child is being abused is required by law to report it.** Child protection offices and children's aid societies are listed on page 62 and the Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services are listed on page 75 of the directory.

Why Do Women Sometimes Stay?

Abuse can damage a woman and her children, both physically and emotionally. Society's beliefs and stereotypes about women in abusive relationships make things more difficult for women. For example, a woman can feel like a victim all over again if people keep asking her why she stays. She may feel more ashamed, helpless, or guilty.

Women stay for a variety of reasons. There are often real barriers to leaving. These barriers can be emotional, cultural or religious, financial, or related to other practical matters.

Women from different racial or cultural groups, new Canadians, lesbians, or women who are disabled often face other challenges. Language barriers, racism, discrimination, fear of being deported, isolation, and disbelief are just a few of the additional barriers to reporting and dealing with abuse.

If you are a new Canadian you may be unfamiliar with the laws of Nova Scotia. Perhaps your faith or tradition says you must stay at home with your family, even if you are being abused. You may have had bad experiences with the law, the medical profession, the court system, or government agencies. You may fear being deported or your partner being deported.

Some laws have changed. You have the right to be protected. Whatever your background, if you are being abused it could be a crime. You have the right to stop that crime.

If you are a friend or counsellor of someone who is being abused, it is helpful to show some understanding of the barriers to leaving. It is also important to offer practical help, advice, and encouragement when she is ready to do something about the situation.

While support services for women are limited, there are resources available. The listings at the back of this book will help you find services that may be helpful.

Barriers to Leaving

Financial

- no income or income that is lower than partner's
- having to leave the family home
- lack of job skills
- belief that partner will not pay maintenance or support
- insufficient government assistance
- shame in using government assistance

Social

- lack of support or isolation from family and friends
- inadequate support from police, legal system, etc.
- lack of affordable child care and housing
- lack of information about legal rights
- isolation from community

Cultural/Religious

- victim blaming, denying, or minimizing the abuse
- pressures on women to feel responsible for relationships
- religious beliefs about women's roles, marriage
- belief that a loving woman can change her partner
- belief that a woman needs a man to be whole
- social disapproval of separation and divorce
- belief that the children need a father

Emotional

- feeling of not being able to cope alone
- fear of threats by partner
- fear that he will get back at you
- fear of going to court or calling the police
- feeling responsible for failing and for breaking up the family
- fear of loneliness, of being unlovable
- loving your partner and hoping that he will change
- fear of being deported
- believing partner when he blames you for his abuse
- blame or fear of rejection by family or friends
- fear of losing partner by leaving temporarily
- fear of his threats to keep the children
- fear of his threats to commit suicide or kill you and the children

What Can You Do about It?

This book is not about telling you what to do. It's about giving you information to make whatever choice is best for you. The information in this section is intended to help you protect yourself and decide what to do next.

You may have some important choices to make. You are the only one who can decide what is best for you.

Making Choices

You may feel scared or helpless. Most women do if they are being abused. But if you want things to get better, somehow you need to make changes, even though you are afraid. It may be very hard. But try to remember, you are not alone. You can get help along the way.

Many women who have been faced with these choices have decided that they didn't deserve to be abused, so they left for a while or for good. This can be a difficult decision, and everyone deserves to be safe and to be treated with respect.

Whatever choice you make, there are people, organizations, and agencies that can help you get some support and assistance *(see directory, page 59)*.

Talking about It

A lot of women find it very helpful to talk to someone about what is happening. You may find it helpful to talk with someone you can trust—a friend or relative, a spiritual leader or elder, a doctor, or a counsellor.

Lots of women don't know anybody they can talk to. You can talk to someone at the transition house nearest to your home. You don't have to stay there to get help and advice. You could also look in the phone book to find someone else

to help you. Most phone books put the number for a help line on one of the front pages. Or you can look in the Yellow Pages under social service organizations and women's organizations and services. If you live in a rural area there may be 1-800 numbers so you can call these organizations and services without charge, and the call will not show up on your phone bill *(see the directory on pages 77–78).*

You might feel ashamed to get help for something that seems so private. It is important to remember that we all need help sometimes. It's okay to ask for help, even though it might be difficult or embarrassing. It takes a lot of courage to reach out for help.

Most women have done a lot to try to make things work, to reduce the violence, to protect the children. You also need to see when you have done everything you can. Think of all the things you have already done! Try to remember how strong you can be.

What If You Stay?

You may decide to stay with your partner, at least for now. Perhaps you feel there is still a chance to keep things together. You may feel that your relationship is really important and you've put a lot into it. Many women do. But you should know that while things may get better for a while, in most cases the abuse tends to get worse later.

If you are a new Canadian woman, it's helpful to get information about your legal status. Depending on your status, you will have different rights regarding staying in Canada, getting a job, accessing services, and so on. You could consult an immigration lawyer, legal aid, or any agency that supports immigrants in their settlement process.

Concerns about Firearms

The current firearms laws state that in order to get a firearm, a Possession and Acquisition Licence or a valid Firearms Acquisition Certificate is required. To get a licence, a person must answer personal history questions and provide character references. A licence may not be granted if it is found that it is

not in the best interest of the applicant or another person's safety that the applicant have firearms.

When a person applies for a firearms Possession and Acquisition Licence, a current or former spouse or common-law partner (with whom the applicant has lived in the past two years) is given the chance to express any fears about safety. A licence can be taken away or refused if the licence holder has a history of domestic violence.

If your partner or ex-partner has a gun licence or is applying for one and you are concerned about him having a gun, you can call the Canadian Firearms Centre. Dial 1-800-731-4000, and select option 3. A firearms officer will take the information and investigate your concerns.

A prohibition order can be issued by the courts if the safety of a person or the public could be threatened by someone having firearms. If a person already has one or more firearms, a prohibition order can be used to take firearms away.

Setting Limits and Protecting Yourself

If you do decide to stay, you may need to set some limits. You can decide what has to change and what behaviour is acceptable if you are going to stay. And you can decide how long you will give him to make these changes. If changes don't happen in the time you set, you may ask him to leave, or depending on the situation, you may decide to leave.

If you do decide to stay with your partner, your safety and the safety of your children come first. Protect yourself. It's very important to have an emergency and personal safety plan.

The Domestic Violence Intervention Act

The *Domestic Violence Intervention Act* is a provincial law designed to provide another tool to protect victims of family violence through emergency protection orders. It came into effect on April 1, 2003.

The Act is meant to be used together with the Criminal Code. In appropriate cases, the police will lay charges under the Criminal Code and the victim or designated person may also seek an emergency protection order. The Act does not replace the need for a shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. In some cases the victim may still need to leave the home.

The law provides another way to help victims and clearly sends the message that domestic violence is never acceptable.

The Act provides the following definitions:

victim:
"...a person who is at least sixteen years of age and has been subjected to domestic violence by another person who

(i) has cohabited or is cohabiting with the victim in a conjugal relationship, or

(ii) is, with the victim, the parent of one or more children, regardless of their marital status with respect to each other or whether they have lived together at any time"

respondent:
"...any person against whom an emergency protection order is sought or made"

What is an Emergency Protection Order?

An Emergency Protection Order allows the justice system to take immediate action to protect a victim of domestic violence in an emergency situation. It is

- available 24 hours a day
- issued by a specially designated justice of the peace
- effective as soon as the respondent is told about it
- remains in effect for as long as directed by the justice of the peace (up to 30 days)
- reviewed by a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia

What can an Emergency Protection Order do?

- give the victim
  - exclusive occupation of the home (up to 30 days)

- temporary possession of specified personal property (such as a car)

- give temporary care and custody of a child to the victim or another person

- direct a peace officer
  - to remove the respondent from the home
  - to accompany the victim or respondent to the home to supervise removal of personal belongings

- order the respondent
  - to stay away from any place identified in the order
  - not to contact the victim or another person
  - not to take, sell, or damage property
  - not to commit any further acts of violence against the victim

- prohibit the publication of the victim's name and address

When is an Emergency Protection Order appropriate?

An Emergency Protection Order is granted only if a designated justice of the peace is satisfied that domestic violence has happened and that the situation is serious and urgent.

The justice of the peace must look at the nature and history of the domestic violence, the existence of immediate danger, and the best interests of the victim or any child or other person in the victim's care.

Who can apply for an Emergency Protection Order?

A victim or person acting on behalf of the victim with approval of the justice of the peace can apply any day of the week from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The following designated people can apply at any time:

- peace officers
- victim services workers employed by the Nova Scotia Department of Justice or the police or RCMP
- designated employees of a transition house that is a member of the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia

What are the offences under the Act?

It is an offence for anyone to

- fail to comply with the provision of an order
- falsely and maliciously make an application
- obstruct any person who is performing any function authorized by an order
- publish any information in contravention of an order

How can a victim use the law?

If you believe that an Emergency Protection Order will help you, call the Justice of the Peace Centre at: **1 866-816-6555** or ask the police, Victim Services, or a transition house worker to apply for an order on your behalf.

Know What to Do in an Emergency

If you do have to act quickly, it's important to be prepared. Here are some things to think about:

- Where can you go in an emergency? You will need to have somewhere safe.
- How will you get there? Is there someone who can come and get you? Can you take a car, taxi, or bus?
- Is there someone you can call to tell what is happening and where you are going?
- Is there someone you can leave your pets with? (Check with local animal shelters. Bide Awhile Animal Shelter in Dartmouth will take pets for short-term care if they have the space; call 469-9578).
- If you need to go to a transition house, do you know how to get there?

My Emergency Plan for Safety

This is my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to it and how to best get myself and my children to safety. I will keep this plan in a safe place.

- Establish an escape route. (Know where you can go to be safe, if only to make a phone call.)
- If you've been abused before, make sure the police are fully aware of the situation.
- Have emergency numbers programmed into the phone (shelter, neighbours, those who will help you—not 911).
- Speak with your neighbours and people you can trust. Let them know what's going on so they can be watching out for you and call police if they become concerned.
- Call a transition house and talk to the staff. You may want to work out a code word so they know who you are if you have to call them in a crisis.
- Hide some money away if possible (you may need emergency taxi fare) and a spare set of car keys in order to leave quickly.
- Talk to the children. They need to know which neighbour to run to in an emergency and how to use the telephone to call police.

Pack an emergency bag in case you need to leave quickly. You can't take everything. Just take what you'll need for a few days. You can leave the bag with a friend if you have to.

If you don't feel safe doing that, you can make a list of things to take and make sure you know where to find them in an emergency:

- money, bank books, credit cards
- clothes for you and the children for a few days
- any medicine you or your children may need
- house keys, car keys
- identification

- important papers: birth certificates, marriage certificates, social insurance numbers, divorce papers, custody documents, court orders, restraining orders, income tax returns
- health cards for you and the children
- medical and vaccination records
- First Nations status card
- immigration/citizenship papers, passports for all family members
- work permits
- the children's favourite toys, books, and special blanket
- copies of your lease, mortgage or other deeds, mortgage payment book
- picture of your spouse/partner (for identification)
- your address/phone book
- car registration, driver's licence, car insurance
- your favourite possessions/books (things that give you comfort)

It's probably a good idea to get legal and other advice now, even before there is an emergency.

If you are in danger, get to a phone and call 911 immediately. All 911 calls are recorded and kept as evidence.

What Happens When You Call the Police?

When the police come, they will stop the violence. Then they will question you and the abuser. They should not talk to the two of you at the same time or in the same room.

Tell the police what happened. Give them details. Show them any injuries or damage to you, your belongings, or your home.

Tell them about anyone who might have heard or seen anything. They may interview neighbours, friends, or medical staff.

The police may arrive with a camera and take pictures of you and of the scene. Or they may ask you to go to the police station to have photographs taken. These pictures may be used as evidence and could help you when you apply for custody of your children or limited access for the abuser.

The police will lay charges where evidence supports this, and they will arrest and remove the abuser in all cases where charges are laid. Their main concern should be for your safety and the safety of your children.

What Happens If the Police Lay Charges?

If there has been physical abuse of any kind, the police should charge the abuser with assault. If this does not happen, ask why. ***Assault is a criminal offence.***

If the police lay charges, they may need help from you in collecting evidence:

- Ask the police to keep torn or bloody clothing and any weapons he used (such as bottles, ropes, scarves, sticks, knives).
- If you are hurt, go to the hospital or to a doctor. Tell them you have been assaulted. Make sure they make a record of your injuries.
- Get photos of your injuries, or of broken furniture or any other damage. Ask a friend to take pictures. Get her to sign and date them as this may be important evidence in a trial.
- Save any threatening telephone answering machine messages, letters, etc.
- Keep a record for yourself. Record times and dates and what he did to you.

The police may arrest him, especially if they think he may hit you again when they leave. If they take him into custody, it is usually only for a few hours, but sometimes it might be overnight.

If the police charge the abuser, they should refer you to the Victim Support Service or a transition house, whether you

decide to leave at this point or not. These agencies can give you information about police procedures and community resources. They can also offer emotional support.

What If You're Still Afraid of Him?

If the police don't take him into custody, and you are afraid to be alone with him, tell them.

Tell the police if you think he will assault you again after they leave. If you decide not to leave, get the names of the police officers in case you need to contact them later.

If you want to leave, ask the police to wait while you get your things. Get them to take you to a safe place like a transition house. If you have children, you have every right to take your children with you. ***The police will not help you remove the children later without a court order.***

If you have to leave in an emergency and you decide not to go back for a while, the police can go with you later to get the rest of your personal belongings. They will protect you, but they're not allowed to help carry your things. You may want to bring a friend along to help you.

What Happens When He's Charged?

If the abuser is charged with a criminal offence like assault or uttering threats, he will have to sign an undertaking before he is released. An undertaking is a promise to appear in court at a certain date and time. This may also require him not to have any direct or indirect contact or communication with you or your children, to stay away from your address, and/or to stop drinking and using drugs.

Ask the police to notify you when he will be released. Ask if he has been required to sign an undertaking setting conditions on his release. If the police or the court don't give you a copy of the undertaking, ask for one. Contact the police who made the arrest, their victim services, or a Victims' Services office run by the Department of Justice (*see directory, page 80*).

When criminal charges are laid you may be required to go to provincial court later to testify. It would help to ask Legal Aid or a transition house for advice about this. Court preparation for those subpoenaed to testify in criminal court proceedings is a specific service offered by the Nova Scotia Department of Justice's Regional Victims' Services Program, in cooperation with the Public Prosecution Service.

If your first language is not English, you may need a translator or interpreter to help you deal with the police, the courts, or transition house staff. Most of these agencies provide this kind of support if you need it. Because some ethnic communities are quite small and people are likely to know one another, care must be taken to make sure that confidentiality is maintained and your privacy respected.

You should know that:

- You can ask for an interpreter.
- You should be given the interpreter's name before the interpreter knows your name.
- You can refuse an interpreter who is known to you and your family.

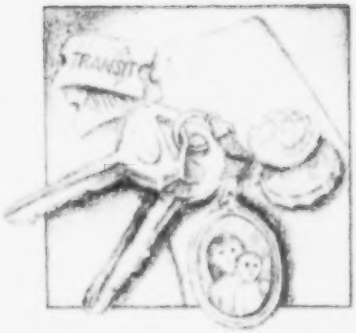
Deciding to Leave

You may have had to leave the abusive situation in an emergency more than once. It may have been your only real choice. But you can also decide to leave, even if it's not an emergency situation. You can choose to leave for a while or forever.

This can be a very hard decision to make. Some women find that going away for a while works for them. It may show their partner that they are serious about the need for change. Other women find that despite promises to change, the abuse continues and the only way to stop it is to leave for good.

It might help to talk to someone you can trust or a person at the local transition house. They can give you support. You can talk to them on the phone. You don't have to give your name. You don't have to stay there to get their help. Whatever you choose to do, believe in yourself.

Will You Take Your Children?



Whether you leave in an emergency, for a short time, or for good, you have every right to take your children with you, especially if you think they will be in danger if you leave them behind.

If you take your children with you there may be fewer problems later. You may decide not to go back or you may decide to get a divorce. If you don't have your children with you, it can take months for the courts to help you get them back, and you may have trouble getting custody. If you want to take the children out of the province, you should definitely get legal advice first.

In any case, it's important to get legal advice right away regarding custody of your children *(see directory for Legal Aid, Legal Information, and Services on pages 72–73).*

Where Can You Go to Be Safe?

You need to go somewhere safe. Would he look for you? Where might he look? Think about where he wouldn't find you. Maybe you can stay with a friend or a relative. If you have the money, you may want to go to a motel.

Some women go to transition houses. These are emergency shelters for women—with or without children. There are several shelters in Nova Scotia *(see pages 78–80).* They all take children and have staff who work with them. Many of the transition houses, however, are not wheelchair accessible. None of them allows pets.

Transition houses usually have secret addresses so women can be safe there. When you call the transition house they will arrange to meet you. If the police are called and it's an emergency, they may drive you there. The phone numbers of all the houses are listed at the back of this book.

At the transition house you will be safe. There will be someone there to listen to you. Staff can advise you about medical, legal, and financial problems. They will help you look at what you can do. They will not force you into anything. You can decide what's best for you.

What you discuss will be private. However, there are exceptions to this, which counsellors will explain to you or you may ask about. One important exception is that anyone who suspects a child is being abused must report it. This includes the staff at transition houses.

There will be other women and children at the shelter. It can help just to talk with someone who has had a similar experience.

You can stay for up to six weeks. You don't have to pay for it. They will provide food, clothing, and other things you need. You will be expected to help with cooking and housework, and to abide by house rules.

You and your children may be given a private room, or you may have to share a room. A few houses have wheelchair accessible rooms and baths *(see pages 78–80 for houses that are wheelchair accessible).*

Some areas of the province do not have transition houses. Some communities have safe houses where women and children can go confidentially to find safety.

All transition houses have outreach programs and workers who will continue to assist you once you have left the house. If you decide not to go to a transition house to stay, they will still help you with information and referral services. *(See the list of transition houses on pages 78–80 of the directory, or call the police, RCMP, or the transition house nearest you.)*

Once You've Left, Then What?

Once you are safe, you can take some time to decide what to do next. You need the time and the space to make decisions that are best for you and your children.

Counsellors at the transition house can give you information and support that will help you make these decisions. If you don't go to a transition house, you can still call there for advice, assistance, or to talk about your options. These phone calls are kept confidential. You can call their 24-hour crisis line. You can arrange a visit with them. Some houses have workers who can meet with you in your home or somewhere safe.

One of the first things you may need to do is to find out about your legal rights, how to get child support and child custody, and what to do if you don't have any money. This section provides some information about these issues.

Legal Matters

Getting Information

You can get some information about police procedures, the law, how the justice system works, and some legal matters from transition houses. The staff at the transition house can also help you get legal advice. You can ask them about this even if you have not stayed there.

Some RCMP and police offices have victim services, which provide emergency support to victims of family violence, as well as information about community resources and what to expect as the case proceeds through the justice system.

In addition, the Nova Scotia Department of Justice has Victims' Services offices in four regions of the province, which serve all of Nova Scotia. Staff will answer questions about your case and the criminal justice process, keep you informed of court proceedings, and help you prepare to testify in court *(see page 80)*.

If you want to find out more about the law, lawyers, and legal matters, call the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (1-800-665-9779 or 455-3135 in Halifax).

They will answer your questions. You can also call Dial-a-Law (420-1888) for information. You will get a tape recording giving basic legal information.

Don't sign any papers that might affect your legal rights until you talk with a lawyer.

If you don't have a lawyer, you can look in the Yellow Pages under Lawyers. The lawyers listed under Family Law may be most helpful to you. If you can, ask your friends or people you work with for names of good lawyers.

If you can't afford a lawyer, call Legal Aid *(see pages 72–73)*. They may provide free legal services if you can't pay and if you qualify. Call them right away. Legal Aid can't work for both you and your abuser. If he calls them first they can't help you, but they can provide a Legal Aid certificate, which you can take to another lawyer if you qualify for aid. You can also call the Legal Information Society's lawyer referral service.

Keeping the Children with You

If you have children and you want custody, apply for a custody order right away. You can do that yourself through Family Court. Then contact a lawyer immediately.

You can get information on how to apply for a custody order from the Legal Information Society. Transition house outreach workers and court advocates can also provide information and will help you with the process whether you are a resident at a transition house or not. If there is a women's centre in your area, they may also be able to help you.

If you are afraid your partner may try to take the children to another country, you can ask the passport office to put the children's names on a security list so that you will be called if their father tries to get a passport for them. You must apply in person or by mail. You must provide ID for yourself, birth

certificates for your children, court documents (such as custody orders, restraining orders, etc.), and a letter detailing why you want their names on the security list. The passport office usually keeps names on this list for 90 days only. After that you must reapply or provide related court documentation.

If your children have another nationality and you are concerned that your partner will try to take them to another country, contact the embassy or consulate and ask them to refuse to issue passports for your children. (Consulate and embassy phone numbers can be found in the government blue pages in the phone book.)

If the Abuse Continues

Once you leave, his abusive behaviour may continue for a while or even get worse. He may try to control you financially, through the children, through the courts, through physical abuse, or by threatening and harassing you.

If this happens, he may be breaking the conditions of his release, or he could be charged with criminal harassment. Keep a written record of all contacts he makes and of what he does or says. Keep any written or recorded messages he leaves for you. Keep the police, his probation/parole officer (if he has one), and your lawyer informed about what is happening.

He may try to make you feel guilty or sorry for him. He may be very loving and generous, showering you with gifts and attention. He may try to scare you into returning. He may try to wear you down until you give up and return to him. He may use his parents, relatives, or friends to pressure you. One way to handle this is to have as little contact with him as possible. You may also apply for a peace bond.

Transition house staff, the police, his probation/parole officer (if he has been put on probation/parole), Victims' Services, your lawyer, a counsellor, or a supportive friend can advise you and help you get through this period. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You don't deserve to be harassed. You deserve a better life.

If you are still afraid of him or he is threatening you, you can apply for a peace bond, if you don't have one yet.

Peace Bonds

A peace bond is a legal paper that a judge can order your abuser to sign. When he signs it, he may promise:

- not to harm or threaten you
- not to have any contact with you, either directly or through other people
- to stay away from your home or work
- not to obtain firearms or weapons
- not to contact the children except when allowed by the court, sometimes through a third party you both agree on

You can ask the judge to add any other conditions you think are needed for your protection.

Applications for peace bonds should always be made to Provincial Court. Family Court will only hear a peace bond application if that court is already dealing with other related matters between you and your partner. You don't need a lawyer, but it can help to talk to one. Regional Victims' Services Offices do provide assistance with peace bond applications in spousal/ partner violence cases. Legal Aid may not help you get a peace bond.

In court, you will need details of when he hit or threatened you. You will have to convince the judge you have good reason to be afraid. Your partner will also be in the court room.

It can take one week (or longer) to get a peace bond. It lasts for up to one year. ***You should know that a peace bond lists your address.*** This is so the police can get to your home in an emergency. But it can also let your abuser know where you are. ***Regional Victims' Services can help you with the process of making arrangements to have your address remain confidential.***

What If He Breaks the Peace Bond?

If he breaks the peace bond, report it to the police so he can be arrested, fined, or put in jail. The police should respond immediately if he violates a 'no contact' order, a peace bond, or a civil restraining order. If the police don't lay charges, find out why. Regional Victims' Services will also help you in this process.

Continue keeping a record of his abusive behaviour and save things like answering machine messages from him. Keep the peace bond with you at all times. Make copies and keep these at home or in a safe place. Inform others (neighbours, friends, landlord) about the peace bond.

Getting Professional Legal Advice

You may need professional legal advice if you decide not to go back to your partner right away. Lawyers can give you professional legal advice if you want to get a peace bond, custody of the children, or a divorce. Many women are scared or nervous about going to a lawyer, but it's not a good idea to put it off. It helps to be prepared.

Things the lawyer will need:

- marriage certificate
- the lease, deed, or mortgage to your house
- your partner's most recent pay stubs or income tax return
- your income tax return
- bank books
- immigration papers/passport
- your record of his abusive actions towards you
- any court orders and notice of court applications

You pay a lawyer by the hour but, depending on the circumstances, you may be asked to pay a deposit (called a retainer). Bring a list of questions and as much information with you as you can. You may want to ask about going to court, about trials, about separation and divorce, about who has the right to the house and belongings. If you have children, ask about custody and child support (maintenance). Child support is what the children's father has to pay you for their care.

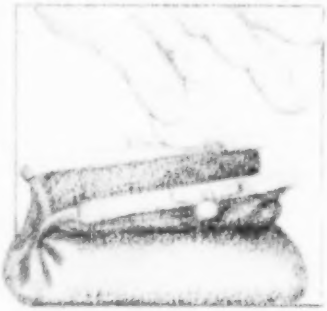
Here are some issues to discuss with the lawyer:

- legal fees
- custody and access to the children
- peace bonds
- what will the judge ask
- maintenance and child support
- can either you or he leave the province/country
- can either you or he take the children
- property rights
- what to expect in court

Know Your Rights

- Half of the money in your joint bank account is yours.
- If you are married or lived common law, half of his pension plan is yours (for the years you were married or lived together).
- Your personal belongings are yours, and so are your children's belongings if the children are with you.

What about Money?



Maybe you are expecting a cheque in the mail from your employer, from EI, Income Assistance, or child and family benefits. You can call those offices and ask them not to mail your cheque to your home address. Call as soon as you can.

You can get all your mail sent to a new address. The post office will re-address your mail for up to six months. It takes 5 to 10 days for the post office to start sending your mail to a new address. There is a fee for this service.

If you have your own money you may want to open your own bank account and arrange for your cheques to be deposited directly into your personal (not a joint) bank account. Then he cannot touch it.

Employment Support and Income Assistance

What if you don't have any money or you don't have enough? If you leave your home and don't have enough money, you may qualify for assistance and employment supports from the Income Assistance Program (welfare). You may be embarrassed to apply for income assistance. But that's what these agencies are for. They are meant to help people through difficult times. You can think of it as a temporary situation, as a way to get out of an abusive relationship. You can think of it as a way to take more control over your life.

To apply for income assistance you can phone, write, or visit the local Department of Community Services' office and ask for an application form. A list of offices is in the directory *(see pages 65–66)*. If you are told you can't have an application form, you can insist that you be given one.

Since August 1, 2001, the Province of Nova Scotia no longer has two programs for financial assistance to persons in need (what used to be the Family Benefits Program and the Social Assistance Program). With the recent introduction of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act, there is one new income assistance program for individuals and families who receive financial assistance and support.

When you apply you will be expected to:

- explain why you are applying
- give your name and address
- provide identification for you and your children (such as Nova Scotia health card, social insurance card, passport, First Nations status card, etc.)
- provide all information related to any income or other money you receive (such as pay stubs, bank statements)
- show your shelter expenses, such as lease, mortgage, power, fuel, and water bills (Note: If the mortgage is in both names, your partner may be required to pay for half.)

Under the Income Assistance Program, you may receive financial help right away for an emergency situation. For ongoing assistance you must participate in an assessment

of your employment ability, which will help determine the supports you will require.

Nova Scotia Child Benefit

Starting July 2001, the Nova Scotia Child Benefit (NSCB) was increased and combined with the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCB-S) to establish a standard benefit of $1,700 a year for each dependent child of low-income families. The National Child Benefit supplement is indexed, so families will get yearly increases beginning in 2002.

Eligibility is determined by family income. Families with incomes under $15,999 will receive the full benefit of $1,700 for each dependent child. Families with incomes between $16,000 and $32,000 will receive partial benefits determined by a sliding scale.

All children in low-income families, whether on income assistance or in working families with incomes below $20,921, will receive the maximum Nova Scotia Child Benefit.

For families on income assistance, the new children's benefits will replace children's personal allowances in their parent's budget. This will allow parents to join the workforce without worrying that their children will lose their benefits.

While children's benefits are now outside the income assistance system, parents receiving income assistance will continue to be eligible for shelter allowance and other special needs benefits (such as Pharmacare) for each dependent child.

For families who don't get the Nova Scotia Child Benefit and receive income assistance, the department will provide a children's allowance of $133 per month. This will continue to be provided until the client begins to receive the Nova Scotia Child Benefit.

Applying for assistance can be a frustrating process, but help is available to find your way through the system. It is also important to know that you can appeal any income assistance decision. Information is available from the Legal Information

Society, your local income assistance office, or a local women's centre.

If you apply for income assistance and you have children, you will probably have to apply for child support/maintenance, because it is expected that the father of your children will help pay for their needs. Any maintenance payments you are entitled to will be counted as income against your income assistance payment.

Maintenance and Child Support

If you have your children with you, you are entitled to receive child support/maintenance from their father. You can apply for maintenance yourself through Family Court. Transition house staff can provide you with information and may be able to help you do this. The court will work out the amount of support to be paid. Support payments can also be determined in divorce proceedings. You may also wish to discuss this matter with a lawyer.

Various Programs to Help You Get Your Money

Once you get a maintenance order you should receive money for the children regularly (usually every month). When the maintenance order is in place, the court will automatically register it with the ***Maintenance Enforcement Program***. The role of this program is to make sure you get maintenance *(see page 74 for Maintenance Enforcement offices).*

The Maintenance Enforcement Program will register your file as a 'caution' case if they are aware that you have been abused by your partner, if there are concerns for your safety, or if you have a peace bond in place. This means they will notify you when they contact him.

If he threatens you or tells you to withdraw from the program, let Maintenance Enforcement know. They will work with you to keep your income intact.

If you apply for income assistance, you must make every effort to get a maintenance order or maintenance agreement for

yourself and/or the support of your children. If you do not have a maintenance order or if your maintenance/child support is believed to be too low, you may be referred to the *Family Maintenance Income Support Program*. They will work with you to get a fair and equitable payment. They may help you work out a voluntary agreement so you don't have to go to court.

If maintenance/child support payments are irregular or not being paid, you can sign an *Assignment of Maintenance form*. This will allow the Department of Community Services to collect your maintenance/child support money and issue you one cheque. It means that even if the order is in default or he doesn't pay regularly, you will get your money because your income assistance cheque will stay the same.

In some cases where there has been abuse, the Income Assistance Program may waive the requirement to pursue maintenance/child support. This may happen if there is evidence of increased risk of abuse for you or your children.

Federal Child Support Guidelines came into effect under the Divorce Act on May 1, 1997. If you got a divorce after this date the court will use these guidelines to calculate child support (maintenance). If you were divorced before May 1, 1997, the guidelines will be used to calculate child support if you apply for a change (also called a variance) in your maintenance order.

The way child support payments are taxed was also changed under the Divorce Act. The parent who receives child support payments will no longer pay tax on the payments, but the parent who pays child support will not be able to claim the money as a tax deduction. At the moment, these guidelines apply only to child maintenance orders made under the Divorce Act. However, the Nova Scotia government is expected to adopt similar guidelines for separated parents (married/common law).

For further information on how all of these changes might affect you, call the Legal Information Society at 1-800-665-9779 or 455-3135 in the Halifax area, or call the local court.

Finding a Place to Live

Where can you go after the transition house, the motel, or your friend's house? In some communities you may be able to get low-cost housing. Call the nearest Housing Services office to find out about low-cost housing. Their offices are listed in the blue pages at the back of your phone book.

Some places also have "second stage housing," which is safe and affordable housing for abused women and their children. Usually you can stay for one year. Your local transition house can tell you more about second stage housing *(see directory page 77)*.

Renting an Apartment

If you need to find an apartment, the newspaper is a good place to start looking. Check the classified ads for ideas of what to look for and how much rent may cost.

According to the law you cannot be refused an apartment because you have children. You can be refused if you have pets.

When you find an apartment, you may need to pay a damage deposit. A damage deposit is money you pay when you first rent a place. It is usually half a month's rent. ***Under exceptional circumstances, Income Assistance may pay the damage deposit if the health and safety of the client/family are in question.*** If the place is not damaged when you move out, you should get this money back.

You may also have to sign a lease. A lease is a contract saying that you are renting the place. It says how long you are renting for, how much you pay each month, and what services you and the landlord will be paying for. Make sure you understand your lease before you sign it. Make sure you get a copy.

What Do I Want in an Apartment?

When you call about an ad for an apartment, ask about the safety of the building, the cost, whether heat and lights are included, the deposit required, the amount of space, and the location and distance to schools.

Ask yourself these questions before you begin apartment hunting:

Safety

- What do you need to be safe from your abuser?
- Do you need to be on the third floor or higher?
- Do you need a security building?

Cost

- How much can you pay for rent?
- How much can you pay for heat and lights?
- Income assistance only allows a certain amount. Find out how much that is.

Space

- How many bedrooms do you need?
- How much space do you need?

Location

- How close do you need to be to work?
- Do you need to be close to schools?

Other Options

- Do you want to live alone or share an apartment?
- If you have children, would you like to share with another mother?

If You Own a House

Maybe you own a house, alone or with your partner. Or maybe he owns the house. If you are not married, whoever owns the house has full legal rights to it. Even if you don't own the house, you may also have some rights. Ask your lawyer. If you are married, you and your husband have equal

legal rights to the house. Even if the house is in his name, he can't sell it without your consent, but get legal advice soon.

Getting a Job

When you're looking for a job you may feel discouraged, especially if you don't find one right away. There are some services and agencies to help you. A few of them are just for women *(see pages 63–65)*. They can help you find out things you need to know, such as:

- what skills you have
- what sort of work might suit you
- what sorts of jobs are out there
- what job training courses you might take

Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job. Sometimes people know of jobs you can apply for.

The Department of Community Services has a Career Planning Program, and some income assistance offices have Employment Support Services or Employment Resource Centres that may help you. Human Resources Development Canada also has resource centres (formerly known as Employment Centres) that offer information and some employment support services.

Check the directory on pages 63–65 under Employment or check your local Human Resources Centre in the blue pages of the telephone book.

Finding Help for Yourself and Your Children

You have been through a lot. You may have made a lot of changes in a short time. You may have a lot more changes to make. All of this can be very stressful.

All of these challenges may make leaving an abusive relationship even more difficult for you and for your children.

There are some support services to help you, many of which you can access for free.

Agencies, such as single parent and family resource centres, Mi'kmaq Family Treatment Centres, and women's centres offer programs for women and children. If not, they may refer you to an agency that will provide these services *(see directory)*.

Transition houses also have programs for you and for your children. The staff are skilled in helping women and children who have been in abusive situations.

Getting Counselling

Maybe you feel afraid or confused. Perhaps you feel hurt, guilty, worried, or angry. Maybe you feel like a failure or like you are sick. Whatever you are feeling, you might want to talk about it with a professional counsellor. Counsellors are trained to help you sort things out. They are there to listen.

Some groups offer counselling. They are listed at the back of this book. Some services are free, though it may take a while to get in to see someone. If police are involved or charges have been laid, you may qualify for payment of counselling costs through the Criminal Injuries Counselling Program. Contact Regional Victims' Services Offices for more information. Getting counselling can sometimes be hard, but you can get some counselling at a transition house. Or the staff may help you find a counsellor. If you are not happy with the first counsellor you go to, try someone else.

Maybe you feel that you aren't tough enough to handle things yourself. Remember that you don't have to prove anything to anyone. You have survived things that a lot of people might not have. And you've taken some really difficult steps to make things better.

It takes courage to see when it's time to reach out and get help. You do deserve to be happy and you need to take care of yourself. You need to be able to count on yourself for the next while.

Help for the Children

Your children are probably confused, scared, and angry. They may need help dealing with all of it. Children need to know that:

- they are safe and will stay safe
- it was not their fault
- you love them
- it's all right to feel whatever they are feeling
- it's okay to talk about it
- they will be listened to and understood if they talk about it

Children may need to know it's still okay to love or miss their father. But they also need to understand that his abusive behaviour is not acceptable. They need to know that you are all right even if you cry and get upset. Children need to know the truth about what is happening.

Your children may need to blame someone. They may see you as the one to blame, because you are the one who left. Perhaps they often saw your abuser blame you for things, so they do the same. But remember, your children show their anger and fear to you because they trust you.

If your children blame you, that may be really hard for you. But be patient with them. Try to help them see why you are doing what you are doing. It may help to let them know you are afraid too.

You may want to consider getting counselling for your children. Remember, getting counselling for them does not mean you have failed in any way. Your children have been through a lot. It's only normal that they might need some help.

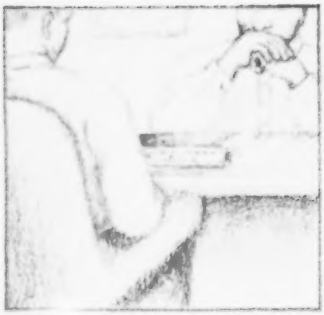
Before You Consider Going Back

At some point, you may think about going back. If so, you may want to talk it over with someone first. Perhaps you could try some personal counselling.

Before you decide, take a moment to ask yourself what you need from a healthy relationship. If he's been getting some help to change his behaviour, ask yourself how far he has moved towards equality. You may want to make a list or compare your thoughts with the equality wheel below.

DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
206 West Fourth Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55806
218-722-4134

Can Programs for Abusive Men Help?



Sometimes the court will require an abusive man to enter a program to help him change his behaviour. In Nova Scotia there are provincially funded programs for abusive men *(see page 74 for men's programs).*

Some men benefit from these programs, some do not. If counselling does help it is only because he wants to change. First he has to admit he has a problem. Then he has to want to work on changing his behaviour. How much he changes, and how he changes, may depend on his reasons for getting help.

With counselling he may stop being abusive. Or he may just change the way he is abusive. Some men stop the physical violence, but they get more emotionally or verbally abusive. Some men don't change at all. There is no guarantee or quick fix. It is important that his counselling focuses on his abusive behaviour and on him taking responsibility to change.

He may quit the program or stop the counselling if you move back with him, or it's no longer required by the court. He may tell you what he thinks you want to hear. You are the best judge of what is right for you. You should not feel pressured to give him any guarantees. Only you can decide if the abuse has stopped.

What about Counselling or Mediation?

If you haven't left him or you're thinking of going back, someone may suggest couple counselling or marriage counselling. This may be helpful, or it may be unsafe for you and not helpful.

Any counsellor you choose must have a good understanding of issues related to women who are abused, and about power and control. In a counselling process it is important that you are able to speak openly and honestly about your situation. If your partner's behaviour or actions keep you from telling the counsellor about his abuse then the counselling will not be helpful.

Separate counselling for each of you is probably a better idea. His violence is his responsibility, not yours. Your responsibility is to learn more about what his abuse has done to you, to learn to respect yourself, and to be happy.

Mediation is a process where two people come to a shared agreement with the aid of a neutral third party, known as a mediator. It is sometimes used to settle differences or when couples are separating or getting a divorce. ***But it is important to stress that mediation is not a good choice when there has been abuse in the relationship,*** when there are threats, coercion, a pattern of control and manipulation, or any safety risks. ***Mediation should not be considered unless you believe it is a safe option. Court staff should be informed about abuse in your relationship.***

Summary

Whatever you decide to do, please remember ...

No one has the right to hit you. No one has the right to hurt you in any way, or to make you live in fear. You do not deserve to be abused. You have the right to feel safe in a relationship. You have the right to be treated with respect.

Whatever you decide to do, your own safety and your children's safety should come first. Remember, you are not alone. There are people who care and there are people who can help. There are places you can go. There are ways to get money and jobs. Remember, you can make changes, and there are people who are willing to help. Only you have the power to decide. But we hope that the information in this book will help you along the way.

If you've already left, you may feel ready to take the first step towards healing, towards a new life, or even start a new relationship. ***Remember, your dreams are what your future is made of.***

Statistics on Woman Abuse

- In 1999, only 36 per cent of Nova Scotian women who experienced spousal violence reported the abuse to police. This is almost double the rate reported in 1993.[1]
- Forty per cent of women in violent relationships were physically injured, 38 per cent say they have feared for their lives, and 15 per cent required medical attention.[1]
- About one in five women report emotional abuse. Women whose male partners are emotionally abusive are up to 20 times more likely to experience physical violence.[1]
- Women in violent relationships report negative emotional consequences more often than men. For example, women victims of spousal violence report lowered self-esteem at a rate four times higher than of male victims of spousal violence.[1]
- Men under age 25 living in common law relationships assaulted their partners at a rate of 19 percent. This is about six times the national average rate of wife assault.[1]
- Women with a disability or a disabling health problem are at a greater risk of being abused.[1]
- More than three times as many Aboriginal women (25 per cent) report abuse, as do non-Aboriginal women (8 per cent).[1]
- In a majority of violent episodes, alcohol abuse is a factor.[1]
- Twenty-one per cent of women abused by a marital partner were assaulted during pregnancy. Forty per cent of these women said the abuse began during pregnancy.[1]
- Three times as many wives as husbands were killed by their spouses in the past two decades.[1]
- A woman's risk of being killed by her husband when separating is more than twice the average rate for women still in married/common law relationships and is more than 15 times that of married men who are separating.[1]
- In 1999 children heard or saw one parent assaulting the other in 37 per cent of homes where spousal violence was present. In 70 per cent of these cases children witnessed assaults against their mothers.[1]
- Assaults against women witnessed by their children are serious. Fifty-three per cent of mothers assaulted in their children's presence were physically injured.[1]

[1] Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999.

[2] Source: Statistics Canada, Violence Against Women Survey, 1993.

Reading List/Resources

This is a selected list of books and resources for women in abusive relationships, and those who are assisting them. Several of the items listed are in the Advisory Council library at Suite 202, Quinpool Centre, 6169 Quinpool Road, Halifax.

Agnew, Vijay. *In Search of a Safe Place: Abused Women and Culturally Sensitive Services*. 1998.

Brewster, Susan. *To Be an Anchor in the Storm: A Guide for Families and Friends of Abused Women*. 2000.

Canadian Panel on Violence against Women. *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence—Achieving Equality*. 1993.

Chesley, Laurie C., and Janice L. McAulay-Ristock. *Abuse in Lesbian Relationships: A Handbook of Information and Resources*. 1992.

Danica, Elly. *Beyond Don't*. 1996.

Davies, Jill. *Safety Planning with Battered Women: Complex Lives, Difficult Choices*. 1998.

DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) Canada. *We Are Those Women!* 1995.

Engel, Beverly. *The Emotionally Abused Woman: Overcoming Destructive Patterns and Reclaiming Yourself*. 1990.

Evans, Patricia. *The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize and How to Respond*. 1992.

Health & Welfare Canada. *Isolated, Afraid and Forgotten: The Service Delivery Needs and Realities of Immigrant and Refugee Women*. 1990.

Jones, Ann. *Next Time She'll Be Dead: Battering and How to Stop It*. 1994.

LeFeuvre, Joan. *Fresh Start*. 1992.

Langlais, Line. *Intervening with Deaf Women Who Are Victims of Spousal Violence*. 1996.

Levy, Barrie. *In Love and Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships*. 2nd ed. 1998.

Lobel, Kerry (ed.). *Naming the Violence: Speaking Out about Lesbian Battering*. 1986.

MacLeod, Linda. *Battered But Not Beaten: Preventing Wife Battering in Canada*. 1987.

MacLeod, Linda & Maria Y. Shin. *Like a Wingless Bird: A Tribute to the Survival and Courage of Women Who Are Abused and Speak Neither English nor French*. 1994.

McTimoney, David & National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. *A Resource Guide on Family Violence Issues in Aboriginal Communities*. 1993.

NiCarthy, Ginny & Sue Davidson. *You Can Be Free: An Easy-to-Read Handbook for Abused Women*. 1989, 1997.

Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick. *Abuse Is Wrong in Any Language: A Handbook for Service Providers Who Work with Immigrant Women*. 1996.

Rench, Janice E. *Family Violence: How to Recognize and Survive It*. 1992.

Status of Women Council Northwest Territories. *From Dark to Light: Regaining a Caring Community*. 1995.

Wilson, Karen J. *When Violence Begins at Home*. 1997.

Wolfe, David A., Peter Jaffe & Susan Wilson. *Children of Battered Women*. Sage Publications. 1990.

Some Books for Children

Berenstein, Sharon Chesler. *A Family That Fights*. 1991.

Brisson Murphy, Joanne. *Feelings*. 1985.

Davis, Diane. *Something Is Wrong at My House: A Book for Children about Domestic Violence*. 1985.

Hochban, Ty & Vladyana Krykorka. *Hear My Roar: A Story of Family Violence*. 1994.

Otto, Maryleah. *Never, No Matter What*. 1988.

Paris, Susan. *Mommy and Daddy Are Fighting*. 1986.

Websites

http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/

http://www.hotpeachpages.net/index.html

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/

http://www.violetnet.org

Directory of Agencies and Services

The programs and services listed in this directory are important to all Nova Scotians but especially to women and children who experience violence.

We encourage you to use them and ask our governments to make sure they are maintained, and if possible, improved.

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For women with hearing impairment and women with speech disabilities: Many of the groups and services listed here do not have TDD/TTY numbers. If you use a TDD/TTY you can contact these services through the Maritime Relay Service. They will interpret for you. Call 1-800-267-6511 or dial 711.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Child Benefits

Nova Scotia Child Benefit
Toll-free 1-800-387-1193

Child Care Information and Subsidies

Child Care Connections
1200 Tower Rd., Suite 100, Halifax 423-8199
Toll-free 1-800-565-8199

Day Care Subsidy Program
2131 Gottingen, 5th Floor, Halifax 424-6679

Child Protection, Children's Aid Societies, Family and Children's Services

Annapolis County 532-2337
Antigonish 863-3213
Cape Breton Victoria County 563-3300
Colchester County 893-5950
Cole Harbour 435-7472
Cumberland County 667-3336
Dartmouth 424-3298
Digby 245-5811
Guysborough 533-4007
Halifax 425-5420
Hants County 798-2289
Inverness/Richmond 625-0660
Kings County 678-6176
Lunenburg County 543-4554
North Sydney 794-5110
Pictou County 755-5950
Queens County 354-3525
Sackville 869-3600
Shelburne County 637-2337

Shubenacadie 758-3553
Toll-free 1-800-263-8686
Yarmouth County 742-0700

Children with Special Needs

Progress Centre for Early Intervention
3530 Novalea Drive, Halifax 423-2686

Counselling Services for Children

IWK Community Mental Health
Intake 464-4110
Clinic 422-1611

COUNSELLING

Most transition houses offer counselling for women and children or they can tell you about other good places to get counselling. You may also be eligible for counselling through Victims' Services (see Victims' Services). The Family Service Association and Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia, listed below, also offer counselling and have a sliding fee scale.

Family Service Association

Halifax: Central intake 420-1980
Other locations: Dartmouth, Lower Sackville, Spryfield

Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia

Sydney (head office) 539-6868
Toll-free in NS: 1-866-330-5952

Other Counselling Services

Criminal Injuries Counselling Program 424-4651
Toll-free 1-888-470-0773

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Outreach Agencies

Ann Terry Outreach Project: Sydney 539-0404

Watershed Association Development Enterprises:
Dartmouth 435-4648

Women's Employment Outreach Halifax 422-8023

Employment Support Services

See Employment Support and Income Assistance, page 65.

Service Canada Centres - (HRDC)

Service Canada Centres have access to Career Resource Centres that provide information to help you find employment now or to decide on a career for the future. Visit the Website: www.ns.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca or call your local Service Canada office.

Amherst Service Area:
Oxford, Parrsboro, Springhill, Pugwash, Wentworth .661-6619

Antigonish Service Area:
Goshen, Liscombe, Monastery, Mulgrave,
St. Mary's, Sherbrooke 863-7069

Bedford Service Area:
Beaverbank, Elmsdale, Enfield, Fall River,
Hammonds Plains, Lantz, Milford,
Milford Station, The Sackvilles, Waverley 426-7698

Bridgewater Service Area:
Chester, Liverpool, Lunenburg, Queens 527-5524

Dartmouth Service Area:
Dartmouth to Ecum Secum 426-5512

Digby Service Area:
Annapolis Royal 245-4784

Glace Bay Service Area:
Birch Grove, Dominion, Donkin, Gardiner Mines,
Port Morien, Reserve Mines 842-2414

Halifax Service Area:
Halifax to Hubbards 426-9617

Inverness Service Area:
Cheticamp, Mabou, Margaree, Meat Cove,
Pleasant Bay, Port Hood 258-2301

Kentville Service Area:
Annapolis, Bridgetown 679-5772

New Glasgow Service Area:
Pictou, River John, Stellarton, Trenton, Westville ...755-7826

North Sydney Service Area:
Alder Point, Baddeck, Ball's Creek, Bay St. Lawrence, Boisdale, Boularderie, Bras d'Or, Cape North, Christmas Island, Dingwall, Englishtown, Florence, Frenchvale, Georges River, Grand Narrows, Grove's Point, Ingonish, Iona, Kempt Head, Leitches Creek, Little Narrows, Little Pond, Millville, Neil's Harbour, Point Aconi, Ross Ferry, Sydney Mines 794-5715

Port Hawkesbury Service Area:
Arichat, D'Escousse, Judique, L'Ardoise, Louisdale, Petit de Grat, Port Hastings, Port Hood, St. Peters, Whycocomagh 625-4115

Shelburne Service Area:
Shelburne 875-3940

Sydney Service Area:
Albert Bridge, Ben Eoin, Big Pond, Catalone, East Bay, Gabarus, Howie Centre, Lingan, Louisbourg, Main-A-Dieu, Marion Bridge, New Victoria, New Waterford, Point Edward, Scotchtown, Sydney River, Victoria Mines, Westmount 564-7249

Truro Service Area:
Brookfield, Colchester, East Hants, Economy, Maitland, Shubenacadie, Stewiacke, Tatamagouche 893-0016

Windsor Service Area:
Bramber, Brooklyn, Centre Burlington, Cheverie, Clarksville, Cogmagun, Curry's Corner, East Uniacke, Ellershouse, Falmouth, Gormanville, Hantsport, Hillsvale, Kempt Shore, Kennetcook, Lakelands, Leminster, Martock, Minasville, Mount Denson, Mount Uniacke, Mosherville, Newport, Newport Corner, Newport Station, Noel Road, North Noel Road, Pembroke, Rawdon, Rawdon Gold Mines, St. Croix, Scotch Village, Smith Corner, South Rawdon, Stanley, Summerville, Tennecape, Three Mile Plains, Upper Falmouth, Upper Rawdon, Vaughan, Walton, Waterville, Windsor Forks, Woodville 798-6518

Yarmouth Service Area:
Clare, Digby, Shelburne, St. Bernard 742-6178

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT & INCOME ASSISTANCE

This is currently known as income assistance, though it may also be referred to as social assistance or welfare.

Department of Community Services

Central Regional Office:
2131 Gottingen St., Halifax 424-5074

Central Region District Offices:

Halifax: 2131 Gottingen St. 424-4150

Cole Harbour: 51 Forrest Hills Parkway, Dartmouth . .435-7472

Dartmouth: 277 Pleasant St., Suite 400 424-3298

Lakeside: 1492 St. Margaret's Bay Rd. 876-0580

Portland: 44 Portland St., 4th Fl., Dartmouth 424-1600

Sackville: 70 Memory Lane 869-3600

Sheet Harbour: 22756 #7 Hwy.
The Bluewater Building 885-2974

Eastern Regional Office:
360 Prince St., Sydney 563-3302

Eastern Region District Offices:

Glace Bay: 633 Main St., Senator's Place, 3rd Fl. 842-4000

North Sydney: 184 Commercial St., Parsons Bldg. . .794-5110

Port Hawkesbury: MacSween St.,
Provincial Bldg., Unit #3 625-0660

Sydney: 360 Prince St., Provincial Bldg. 563-3300

Northern Regional Office:
610 East River Rd., Ste. 225, New Glasgow 755-7023

Northern Region District Offices:

Antigonish: 325 Main St. 863-3213

Colchester: 60 Lorne St., Truro 893-5950

Cumberland: 26-28 Prince Arthur St., Amherst 667-3336

Guysborough: Chedabucto Mall 533-4007

New Glasgow: 678 East River Rd. 755-7363

Western Regional Office:
10 Webster St., Suite 202, Kentville 679-6715

Western Region District Offices:

Annapolis: 5495 Granville Rd., Granville Ferry 532-2337

Digby: 84 Warwick St. 245-5811

East Hants: 15 Commerce Court, Ste. 130, Elmsdale . . 883-3534

Hants: 80 Water St., Windsor 798-8319

Kings: 76 River St., Kentville 678-6176

Lunenburg: 99 High St., Suite 105, Bridgewater 543-5527

Queens: 123 Henry Hensey Dr., Liverpool 354-2771

Shelburne: Hwy. #3, Barrington 637-2335

Yarmouth: 10 Starrs Rd. 742-0741

FAMILY COURTS

(Justice Centres and Family Division of the Supreme Court*)

Amherst: 16 Church St. 667-2256

Antigonish: 11 James St. 863-7312

Bridgewater: 599 Kings St. 543-4679

Halifax: 3380 Devonshire Ave. 424-3990

Kentville: 136 Exhibition St. 679-6075

Pictou: 69 Water St. 755-6520

Port Hawkesbury*: 2-218 MacSween St. 625-2665

Sydney*: 136 Charlotte St., Ste. 1 & 2 563-2200

Truro: 540 Prince St. 893-5840

Yarmouth: 403 Main St. 742-0550

FAMILY RESOURCE, SUPPORT, AND SINGLE PARENT CENTRES

Amherst: Maggie's Place. 667-7250

Antigonish: Kids First Family Resource Centre 863-3848

Bridgewater: Family Support Centre 543-1301

Canning: Kids Action Program 582-1375

Cape Breton: Family Place Resource Centre 562-5616

Digby: Digby County Family Resource Centre 245-6464

Guysborough: Kids First Family Resource Centre 533-3881

Halifax Regional Municipality:

- Bayers/Westwood Family Support Resource Centre ..454-9444
- Dartmouth Family Resource Centre 464-8230
- Dartmouth Parent Resource Centre 464-2203
- Family SOS 455-5515
- Home of the Guardian Angel 422-7964
- Memory Lane Family Place 864-6363
- Military Family Resource Centre, CFB Halifax 427-7788
- Military Family Resource Centre, CFB Shearwater ...720-1885

PACT: Parent and Child Together 434-8952
Parent 'n Tot Meeting Place 443-9569
Parent Research Centre 492-0133
Single Parent Centre 479-3031
Inverness County 258-3002
Liverpool: Queens Family Resource Centre 354-7176
New Ross: Family Resource Centre 689-2414
New Waterford: Family Resource Centre 862-7140
Pictou County: Kids First Family Resource Centre 755-5437
Shelburne: Kings Street Centre. 875-3256
Truro: Maggie's Place 895-0200
Victoria County 336-2444
Yarmouth: Parent's Place. 749-1718

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES

Federal, provincial, and municipal governments list some numbers in the blue pages at the back of your telephone book. Look first in the index at the beginning of the blue pages. If you cannot find a number for the federal, provincial, or municipal service you want, a good place to start is Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

Federal Government

Information line 1-800-622-6232
TTY/TDD 1-800-926-9105

Provincial Government

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women 424-8662
Toll-free 1-800-565-8662
Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission 424-4111
Toll-free 1-877-269-7699
Nova Scotia Ombudsman's Office 424-6780
Toll-free 1-800-670-1111
Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (inquiries about government programs and services) 1-800-670-4357

HEALTH

Addiction/Drug Dependency Services

Choices Adolescent Program: Halifax 424-4422

Marguerite Centre 876-0006

Matrix Women's Services:
- Halifax 424-5920
- Dartmouth 424-5623

Regional Offices:
- Dartmouth/Halifax 424-5623
- Pictou 485-4335
- Sydney 563-2050
- Yarmouth 742-2406

General Health Services

Well woman clinics operate on an occasional basis in many communities. Check with the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women listed on page 68 or phone your nearest hospital for more information.

Halifax area:
- IWK Health Centre 470-8888
- North End Community Health Centre 420-0303
- Public Health Services: HRM 481-5800

Mental Health Services

Amherst:
- Cumberland Mental Health Centre 667-3879

Annapolis Royal:
- Annapolis Community Health Centre ... 532-2381 (ext. 143)

Antigonish: St. Martha's Hospital
- Mental Health Clinic 863-4511

Berwick: Kentville Mental Health
- Adult Clinic ..... 678-7381 (ext. 2870)

Bridgewater: South Shore Regional Hospital
- Mental Health Services 527-5228

Canadian Mental Health Association:
- Nova Scotia office 466-6600
- Annapolis County: Bridgetown 665-4801
- Cape Breton: Sydney 567-7735

Colchester/East Hants County: Truro 895-4211
Dartmouth 463-2187
Halifax 455-5445
Kings County: Kentville 679-7464
Lunenburg County: Bridgewater 527-5228
Pictou County: New Glasgow 755-9441
Queens County: Liverpool 354-2721

Clare Mental Health Clinic 645-3470

Colchester County Mental Health Services 893-5526

Dartmouth Mental Health Services 464-3116

Digby Mental Health Centre 245-4709

Glace Bay Mental Health Clinic 849-4413

Halifax: Abbie Lane Mental Health Outpatient, QEII ..473-2531

IWK Health Centre: Community Mental Health 422-1611

Middleton: Annapolis County Mental Health Clinic ..825-4825

New Glasgow: Aberdeen Mental Health Services 755-1137

New Waterford Mental Health Clinic 862-7195

North Sydney Mental Health Clinic 794-8551

Shelburne Mental Health Clinic 875-4200

Sydney Adult Outpatient Clinic 567-7730

Windsor Mental Health Clinic 792-2042

Yarmouth Mental Health Clinic 742-4222

Sexual and Reproductive Health

IWK Health Centre: Women's Clinic, Halifax 470-8888

**Formerly known as Planned Parenthood Nova Scotia

Amherst: Sexual Health Centre for Cumberland Co. ..667-7500
Bridgewater: Sexual Health Centre Lunenburg Co. ..543-1315
Halifax: Halifax Sexual Health Centre 455-9656
New Glasgow: Pictou Co. Centre for Sexual Health ...695-3366
Sheet Harbour: Sheet Harbour Sexual Health Centre ..885-2789

Sydney: Cape Breton Centre for Sexual Health 539-5158

Yarmouth: Yarmouth Centre for Sexual Health 742-0085

Sexual Assault Centres

Halifax: Avalon Sexual Assault Centre 422-4240
Crisis Line 425-0122

Truro: Colchester Sexual Assault Centre 897-4366

HELP LINES

Cape Breton/Sydney (6 pm–midnight) 562-4357
Toll-free 1-800-957-9995

Halifax Regional Municipality (24 hours) 421-1188

Kids Help Phone (24 hours, bilingual) 1-800-668-6868

Pictou County (noon–midnight/7 days a week) 752-5952

Strait/Richmond/Inverness area
(6 pm–midnight) 625-5117

HOUSING

Regional Housing Authorities can provide information about subsidized housing in your area. Also check at your local transition house about second stage housing.

Housing Services Offices

Cape Breton Region:
Sydney 563-2120
Toll-free 1-800-567-2135

Central Region:
Amherst 667-1161

New Glasgow 755-5065
Toll-free 1-800-933-2101

Truro 893-5999
Toll-free 1-866-525-5454

Metro Region:
Bedford 424-5110
Toll-free 1-800-774-5130

Western Region:
Bridgewater 543-7336
Toll-free 1-800-278-2144

Middleton 825-3481
Toll-free 1-800-564-3483

Regional Housing Authorities

Annapolis Valley Service Area:
Annapolis, Kings, and Hants counties 681-3179
Toll-free 1-800-441-0447

Cape Breton Island Service Area: Cape Breton, Richmond,
Inverness, and Victoria counties 539-8520
Toll-free 1-800-565-3135

Cobequid Service Area: Cumberland and
Colchester counties 667-8757

Eastern Mainland Service Area: Antigonish, Guysborough,
and Pictou counties 752-1225

Metropolitan Regional Housing Authority Service Area:
Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford and County 420-6000
Toll-free 1-800-565-8859

South Shore Service Area: Lunenburg and
Queens counties 543-8200
Toll-free 1-888-845-7208

Tri-County Service Area: Digby, Shelburne, and
Yarmouth counties 742-4369
Toll-free 1-800-306-3331

LEGAL AID, LEGAL INFORMATION, AND SERVICES

Besides the services listed below, transition houses can often help you with information about the court process and other legal matters.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

Amherst: Cumberland County 667-7544
Toll-free: 1-866-999-7544

Annapolis Royal: Annapolis County/Digby 532-2311
Toll-free: 1-866-532-2311

Antigonish: Antigonish County 863-3350
Toll-free: 1-866-439-1544

Bridgewater: Lunenburg County/South Shore 543-4658
Toll-free: 1-866-543-4658

Dartmouth 420-8815
Toll-free: 1-877-420-8818

Halifax - North 420-3450
Toll-free: 1-866-420-3450

Halifax - South 420-6583
Toll-free: 1-877-777-6583

Kentville 679-6110
Toll-free: 1-866-679-6110

Liverpool (Sub Office): Queens County 354-3215

New Glasgow: Pictou County 755-7020
Toli-free: 1-877-755-7020

Port Hawkesbury 625-4047
Toll-free: 1-888-817-0116

Sydney: Cape Breton 563-2295
Toll-free: 1-877-563-2295

Truro: Colchester County 893-5920
Toll-free: 1-877-777-5920

Windsor: Hants County 798-8397
Toll-free: 1-866-798-8397

Yarmouth: South Shore 742-7827
Toll-free: 1-866-742-3300

Halifax: Dalhousie Legal Aid 423-8105

Legal and Justice Support Services

Coverdale Courtwork Services
(Supporting women through the Justice System)
Halifax 422-6417

Elizabeth Fry Society (for women in conflict with the law)

Halifax: 454-5041

Province-wide toll-free 1-877-619-1354

Sydney: 539-6165

Legal Information and Lawyer Referral

Dial-A-Law (recorded services 24 hrs/day) 420-1888

Info line & Lawyer Referral Service 455-3135
Toll-free 1-800-665-9779

Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia
5523B Young St., Hydrostone Market, Halifax
(Office Number) 454-2198

MAINTENANCE AND CHILD SUPPORT

Federal Child Support Guidelines:

Toll-free 1-888-373-2222

Maintenance Enforcement Program

Head Office 424-0050

InfoLine (24-hour access): Toll-free 1-800-357-9248

MEN'S PROGRAMS

Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs

Amherst/Cumberland County:
New Directions 667-4500

Bridgewater/Lunenburg and Queens Counties:
Alternatives 543-7444

Halifax:
New Start Counselling 423-4675

Sydney/Cape Breton Island:
Second Chance 567-0979

Truro/Colchester and East Hants counties:
Bridges 897-6665

Westville/New Glasgow, Pictou, Antigonish, Guysborough counties:
New Leaf 396-2440

MI'KMAQ SERVICES

Child Help Initiative Project

Liverpool 354-2751

Sydney 567-1240

Truro 843-3551

Micmac Native Friendship Centre: Halifax 420-1576

Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre: Halifax 422-7850

Native Council of Nova Scotia

Truro 895-1523

Native Social Counselling Agency (Provincial) 895-1738

Nova Scotia Native Women's Association 893-7402

Welkaqanik Next Step Shelter: Truro 895-1738

Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services

Eskasoni 379-2433

Toll-free 1-800-263-8300

Indianbrook 758-3553

Toll-free 1-800-263-8686

Mi'kmaq Family Treatment Centres

Millbrook First Nation: Truro 893-8483

Crisis 1-800-565-4741

Waycobah First Nation: Whycocomagh 756-3440

Crisis 1-800-565-3440

Policing

Cape Breton First Nations Communities:

RCMP telecommunication 1-800-803-7267

Mainland First Nations Communities:

Acadia, Wildcat, and Bear River

RCMP Telecommunication 1-800-272-9674

Annapolis Valley, Horton, Gold River, Cole Harbour, Sheet Harbour

RCMP Telecommunication 1-800-272-9569

Millbrook, Indianbrook, Pictou Landing, Afton

RCMP Telecommunication 1-800-272-9670

Local 893-1323

POLICE AND RCMP – Emergency 911

Please see the blue pages in your phone book for non-emergency Police and the white pages for RCMP numbers (listed under Royal Canadian Mounted Police) in your area. Many RCMP detachments and police departments offer victims' services or victims' assistance programs to help you. Ask if these services are available to you. (RCMP TDD: 426-7554)

RESOURCES FOR AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN WOMEN

African United Baptist Women's Institute 752-4978

Association of Black Social Workers 494-2969

Black Educators Association 424-7036

Toll-free 1-800-565-3398

Congress of Black Women 462-0344

RESOURCES FOR NEW CANADIAN WOMEN

Centre for Diverse Visible Cultures 445-0946

Toll-free 1-888-912-1131

Citizenship and Immigration Canada 1-888-242-2100

TTY 1-888-576-8502

Cultural Health Information and Interpreting Services: 425-5532

Halifax Refugee Clinic 422-6736

Metro Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) 423-3607

YMCA Newcomers Centre 457-9622

RESOURCES FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Disabled Person's Commission: Halifax (provincial) 424-8280

Toll-free 1-800-565-8280

RESOURCES/INFORMATION ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE

Transition houses and women's centres will also have resources and information about woman abuse and family violence.

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence:

Toll-free 1-800-267-1291

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women 424-8662

Toll-free 1-800-565-8662

SECOND STAGE HOUSING

Second stage housing offers safe and affordable housing for abused women and their children. You can also contact through your local transition house.

Antigonish: Naomi Society 863-3807

Metro: Alice Housing 466-8459

New Glasgow: Pictou County Second Stage Housing .. 928-0970

Sydney: Cape Breton Transition House 562-4190

Truro: Welkaqanik Next Step Shelter
(priority to Aboriginal women) 895-1738

SUPPORT/REFERRAL/ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

These community and women's organizations can provide information or refer you to services or support groups. Also check listings under Transition Houses, Health, and Family Resource Centres. Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (1-800-670-4357) may also have listings of groups or programs in your community.

Other Community Organizations

Dartmouth: Self Help Connection 466-2011

Halifax: YWCA 423-6162

New Glasgow: Pictou County YM/YWCA 752-0202

Women's Centres

Provide a range of programs, information, advocacy and referral services for women.

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre
219 Main St, Suite 204 863-6221

Bridgetown: The Woman's Place
38 Queen St. 665-5166

Halifax: Dalhousie University Women's Centre
6286 South St. 494-2432

Halifax: Saint Mary's University Women's Centre
526 Student Centre 496-8722

Lunenburg: Second Story Women's Centre
22 King St. 543-1315

New Glasgow: Pictou County Women's Centre
503 South Frederick St. 755-4647

Sheet Harbour: LEA Place Women's Centre
17 Behie St. 885-2668

Sydney: Every Woman's Centre
102 Townsend St. 567-1212

Truro: Central Nova Women's Resource Centre
535 Prince St. 895-4295

Wolfville: Acadia University Women's Centre
Student Union Building 585-2140

Yarmouth: TRI County Women's Centre
126 Brunswick St. 742-0085

Women's Organizations—Provincial

Fédération des Femmes Acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse:
Dartmouth: 433-0065

TRANSITION HOUSES AND SHELTERS

Transition houses offer emergency shelter, information, and support for women in abusive relationships. For more information on services call the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia 429-7287.

Amherst: Autumn House
(Wheelchair accessible) (will accept collect calls)
Crisis line 667-1200
Office 667-1344

Antigonish: Naomi Society
Office/Crisis 863-3807
Weekend Crisis Response 1-888-831-0330

Bridgewater: Harbour House
(Wheelchair ramp)
Crisis line 543-3999
Office 543-3665
Outreach 543-9970
Toll-free 1-800-543-3999

Halifax: Adsum House
(For homeless women and children)
..... 429-4443/423-4443

Halifax: Barry House
(Emergency shelter for homeless women and children at risk)
.....422-8324

Halifax: Bryony House
(Wheelchair ramp, one room accessible, accessible bathroom, bilingual staff as required)
24 hr Crisis line 422-7650
Office 423-7183
Outreach 429-9008

Kentville: Chrysalis House
(Two bilingual staff, wheelchair ramp, one large room, bathroom accessible)
Crisis line 679-1922
Office 679-6544
Outreach 679-1155
Toll-free 1-800-264-8682

New Glasgow: Tearmann Society
(Wheelchair ramp, main floor accessible)
Crisis line 752-0132
Office 752-1633
Outreach 752-2591
Toll-free 1-888-831-0330

Port Hawkesbury: Leeside Transition House
(Wheelchair accessible)
Crisis line 625-2444
Office 625-1990
Outreach 625-1106
Toll-free 1-800-565-3390

Sydney: Cape Breton Transition House
(Wheelchair lift, bilingual staff as required)
Crisis line 539-2945
Office 562-4666
Outreach Program 562-3045
Toll-free 1-800-563-2945
Children's Services 562-1336

Truro: Third Place
(Wheelchair ramp, one room, partial bath, and common areas accessible)
Crisis line 893-3232
Office 893-4844
Outreach 895-9740
Toll-free 1-800-565-4878

Yarmouth: Juniper House
Crisis line 742-8689
Office 742-4473
Outreach 742-0231
Toll-free 1-800-266-4087

VICTIMS' SERVICES

The Victims' Services Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Justice provides information and confidential support services to victims of crime and their families. Check also with your local RCMP detachment, police department, or transition house for support and assistance in family violence cases.

Department of Justice Victims' Services

Head Office: Halifax 424-3309

Annapolis, Kings, Hants, Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne, and Yarmouth counties:
Kentville 679-6201
Toll-free 1-800-565-1805

Cape Breton, Richmond, Inverness, and Victoria counties:
Sydney 563-3655
Toll-free 1-800-565-0071

Halifax Regional Municipality: Dartmouth 424-3307

Pictou, Guysborough, Antigonish, Colchester, and Cumberland counties:
New Glasgow 755-7110
Toll-free 1-800-565-7912

Police-Based Victims' Services

Halifax Regional Police Victim Services Unit 490-5300

Notes

Your own list of phone numbers

Name	Number